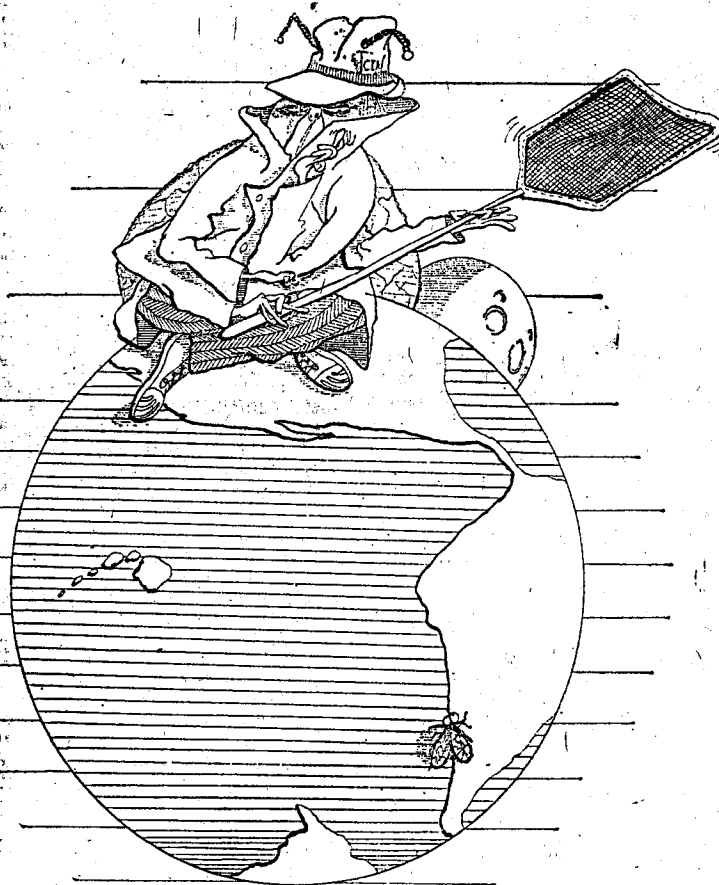


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CIA: 'A Service, Not a Weapon'



By Chuck Steacy

From its inception, the chief problem of the Central Intelligence Agency has been confusion of purpose. By definition, intelligence is a service. But the creation of a U.S. intelligence service was sold to the country and the Congress as a weapon with which fight communism. The two are not identical goals and the confusion is illustrated in the career of James Angleton who resigned the other day as chief of the agency's counter espionage effort.

CIA Director William Colby requested Angleton's resignation following charges that he had conducted illegal domestic operations. But Colby was ready. In the view of many CIA employees Angleton had become a mixed up man.

Back in the late '40s he was the ideal choice for the counter espionage work to which the late Frank Wisner assigned him. Painstaking, suspicious, quick to note deviations from the norm, he had the kind of mind one associates with the classic detective.

In addition, as those of us who were with him in CIA may recall, he had a capacity for empire building. From the end of world War II until last week, he built his power within the agency to the point where he was virtually untouchable.

Successive directors, newly come to the pinnacle, were fascinated at their first encounter with this bespectacled, scholarly looking figure with the stooped shoulders, who walked cat-like into the office, and when the door was closed, introduced himself with some startling and calculated revelation.

"I think you'll be interested in this," he would begin with a chuckle, and then proceed to tell his new boss exactly what his new boss's hostess had said about him after the new boss had departed her house on the previous evening.

Or he would show the new boss a copy of a private letter written by some employee or agent on the subject of the new boss. It was heady stuff, ac-

quired by such means as the rest of us may imagine, but which only Angleton knew. A fly fisherman by hobby, he often referred to his knowledge of the personal and private as the result "of a little fishing."

With one director of CIA, himself a fly fisherman, Angleton established such rapport that the two talked of secret matters in terms of fly tying: "I caught it on a little brown bug with long antenna." Many people in CIA feared Angleton as much as successive directors held him in awe.

So his success was great, and not only in terms of power. His job was spelled out in the agency's charter: "to protect intelligence sources and methods from unauthorized disclosure." CIA is the only major intelligence service in the world which, so far as is known, has never employed a "mole," to use John Le Carre's description of the traitor in the midst. It is a fact of which Angleton may be proud.

But at some point in his long service, Jim Angleton's sharp and studious mind became confused by Jim Angleton's ideology. As the external world changed, as it became clear that Khrushchev's policies would not be those of Stalin, that the United States had won the cold war, that rumors of a Sino-Soviet split were true, Angleton found it difficult to straighten out in his own mind the agency's confused purpose.

Ideology told him the cold war must go on, that the Chinese and Russians were faking their feud, that the comings and going of Aeroflot representatives to new nations revealed a Soviet intent on aggression in those nations, that those who had sold Mr. Nixon on detente were dupes and possibly knaves. He believed his ideology and shaped facts to fit it and his power became dangerous.

He is not the last of the ideologists to leave the agency but his departure will help CIA to straighten out its purpose: It is, after all a service, not a weapon in the cold war.